Chapter 1

Conceptualizing Service-Learning

What exactly is service-learning? A pedagogy? A philosophy? And what are its possibilities? Can it change an individual's perspective? Can it transform a classroom? A community? And, perhaps most critically, what are its limits? The first part of this book examines these questions in-depth, with this chapter focusing on carefully and analytically conceptualizing what service-learning is (and is not), laying the groundwork for the analyses in the rest of the book, and drawing out some implications for the field of service-learning in general.

The standard argument is that service-learning pedagogy rejects the "banking" model of education where the downward transference of information from knowledgeable teachers to passive students is conducted in fifty-minute increments. It subverts the notion of classroom as graveyard—rows and rows of silent bodies—for an active pedagogy committed to connecting theory and practice, schools and community, the cognitive and the ethical. Such an active and engaging framework has garnered national attention as a means of reengaging today's students with both academics and civic values (Colby et al. 2003, 2007).

Moreover, service-learning advocates point to research demonstrating that service-learning enhances student outcomes (cognitive, affective, and ethical), fosters a more active citizenry, promotes a "scholarship of engagement" among teachers and institutions, supports a more equitable society, and reconnects colleges and universities with their local and regional communities (e.g., Astin et al. 1999; Benson et al. 2007; Wade 2007). By emphasizing real-world learning

and reciprocity between postsecondary institutions and communities, service-learning seems to serve as a powerful counterpoint to contemporary positivistic educational trends that deprofessionalize teaching, narrowly focus on quantifiable outcomes, and maintain instrumental conceptions of teaching and learning.

Yet despite (or perhaps because of) the recent proliferation and expansion of service-learning theory and practice, there is a troubling ambiguity concerning even basic principles and goals in the service-learning literature. Is service-learning a pedagogical strategy for better comprehension of course content? A philosophical stance committed to the betterment of the local and/or global community? An institutionalized mechanism fostering students' growth and self-awareness concerning issues of diversity, volunteerism, and civic responsibility? Or, as some critics note, a voyeuristic exploitation of the "cultural other" that masquerades as academically sanctioned "servant leadership" (e.g., Cross 2005; McKnight 1989)? All of these perspectives, and more, are to be found as prominent articulations of what service-learning "truly" is.

I thus want to begin to clarify service-learning practice and theory by offering four distinct conceptualizations of how service-learning is articulated in the literature and enacted in the field: technical, cultural, political, and antifoundational. In doing so, I hope to accomplish three goals: first, to clarify the assumptions of and implications for service-learning within each perspective; second, to suggest that the dissonance and synthesis across these multiple perspectives offers a means of understanding some of the most vexing problems within service-learning theory and practice; and third, to demonstrate that service-learning is never a singular, stable, or, ultimately, controllable practice. This last point, in particular, underpins this book's approach to rethinking our approach of how we think about, talk about, and enact service-learning and other forms of engaged scholarship in the academy.

Conceptualizing Service-Learning from Multiple Perspectives

Scholars have put forward useful definitions, criteria, and conceptualizations of service-learning. A commonly cited definition (Bringle and Hatcher 1995) argues that "service-learning [is] a course-based, credit-bearing, educational experience in which students (a) participate in an organized service activity that meets identified community needs and (b) reflect on the service activity in such a way as to gain

further understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and an enhanced sense of civic responsibility" (112). Such an articulation is a model in the field precisely because it attempts to balance service and learning and link them in a meaningful way.

It is possible, other scholars suggest (Furco 1996; MJCSL 2001; Sigmon 1994), that a spectrum of service programs fall under the rubric of "service-learning." Programs that emphasize the service component and the "served"—for example, volunteer activities and community service—would fall on one end of the spectrum, while programs that focus on the learning and the "provider" of the services—for example, internships and field-based education—would fall on the other end. The scope of what potentially counts as service-learning has thus resulted in the development of multiple monikers—"academic service-learning," "community-based service-learning," "field-based community service"—in an attempt to differentiate between programs and emphasize what is of primacy.

Irrespective of the definitional emphasis, service-learning advocates put forward a consistent articulation of the criteria for service-learning to be legitimate, ethical, and useful. These may be glossed as the "4 Rs"—respect, reciprocity, relevance, and reflection (Sigmon 1979; MJCSL 2001; Campus Compact 2000). First, those doing the serving should always be respectful of the circumstances, outlooks, and ways of life of those being served. The point to be made is that the server is not a "white knight" riding in to save anyone but just another human being who must respect the situation she is coming into. Second, the service is not to benefit only the server—for example, the white, middle-class, preservice teacher who, through her tutoring, becomes exposed to and begins to understand how the "underprivileged" live and behave. Not only should the server provide a meaningful and relevant service to those he is serving, but often members of the community being served should be the ones responsible for articulating what the service should be in the first place.

Third, the service must be relevant to the academic content of the course. This is not simply to say that course credit is based upon learning rather than service; more forcefully, the service should be a central component of a course and help students engage with, reinforce, extend, and/or question its content. Finally, service-learning does not provide transparent experiences; reflection is required to provide context and meaning. Given the real-time aspect of service-learning, students need multiple opportunities to engage with the ambiguity and complexity of the experience. The issues that arise, for example, from tutoring migrant youth or working with elderly hospice patients are not simple

topics that can be addressed in a forty-five- or even a ninety-minute class; they require time for reflection, discussion, and research.

The breadth of how and why service-learning is enacted—it is used from elementary school until graduate school and in disciplines ranging from accounting to women's studies—provides for a wide range of conceptualizations of the field. Kendall (1990), for example, differentiates between service-learning as a pedagogy—a specific methodology for the delivery of content knowledge—and as a philosophy—a world view that permeates the curriculum, instruction, and assessment of a course. Alternatively, Lisman (1998) suggests that all modes of service-learning are embedded in philosophical orientations that he differentiates as "volunteerism," "consumerism," "social transformation," and "participatory democracy." Each perspective, Lisman argues, privileges different modes of service-learning engagement with vastly different impacts on individual and societal outcomes. Other scholars (e.g., Morton 1995; Liu 1995) attempt to avoid such dichotomization by suggesting that all modes of service-learning, if enacted "thickly" enough, are useful for providing valuable service and increasing academic learning.

At one level, I find these definitions, criteria, and conceptualizations helpful. Such perspectives provide a useful heuristic for understanding and contrasting distinct and often divergent forms of service-learning as they are perceived and enacted across multiple disciplines. They provide both insiders (e.g., practitioners, researchers, tenure committees, and administrators) and outsiders (e.g., general public, philanthropic organizations, and lawmakers) a language for situating the multiple forms of service-learning. Yet there are several distinct problems with such traditional articulations of how to understand service-learning: the problematics of a latent teleology and an unsupportable ethical foundationalism.

By a latent teleology I mean that most definitions, criteria, and conceptualizations of service-learning privilege particular modes and goals of service-learning and view deviations from such implicit norms as derivative. Just like the medieval concept of an ordered universe structured around a "great chain of being," service-learning scholarship and practice privileges: (a) volunteer activities done by (b) individual students with high cultural capital for the sake of (c) individuals with low cultural capital (d) within the context of an academic class (e) with ameliorative consequences. To reverse any of these five preconditions or the seemingly logical flow of the direction of these actions is to expose the strong normative framework within which service-learning operates.

To suggest, for example, that students engaged in service-learning be paid, or that they provide service to the rich, or that the outcomes may be other than positive, is to go against the grain of the implicit normative framework of what is understood by "service-learning." My point is not to promote any such specific alternative for the moment; rather, it is to make clear that undergirding almost all conceptualizations of service-learning are modernist, liberal, and radical individualistic notions of self, progress, knowledge, and power.

Specifically, such a worldview is grounded in the notion that individuals are autonomous change agents who can effect positive and sustained transformations. It is the belief that we can consciously and deliberately bring about betterment (by the more powerful for the less powerful) through a downward benevolence whereby all benefit. This is the Enlightenment project writ large, grounded in a latent teleology that presumes and works within a worldview of a constantly progressive upward movement through seemingly universal goodwill and good faith.

The latter point also reveals the unsupportable ethical foundationalism of service-learning. Namely, service-learning practice and scholarship is predicated on the belief that both the process and outcomes of service-learning are universally beneficent. This view seems confirmed when one hears stories of elementary school students revitalizing run-down neighborhoods or college students working hand-in-hand with community organizations to develop environmental impact statements concerning a proposed incinerator plant. It becomes more problematic, however, when certain kinds of questions are made visible: What sustained community impact is achieved? Who benefits from the enactment (and publicity) of such processes? What actual learning is documented as a result of such a process? Service-learning programs, to take but one example, have promoted much goodwill among those doing the actual service-learning, but there is considerably less evidence that it has provided much benefit for the recipients.

It is sufficient at this point to note that both through the frame of critical theory and the "posts" (postmodernism, poststructuralism, and postcolonialism [Kumashiro 2002]), all the above-stated suppositions have become problematic. From the notion of autonomous individuals consciously willing positive change to the win-win mantra of service-learning advocates, conceptualizations of service-learning have glossed over the presumption of neutrality, the privileging of whiteness, and the imbalance of power relations. I will address these issues and limits in much more detail in the next two chapters; for now it is enough to acknowledge these critiques to articulate a different means by which to view service-learning.

It is thus useful to put forward four perspectives on service-learning—technical, cultural, political, and antifoundational—that can differentiate between highly distinctive and divergent goals. I should note that I do not presume that service-learning practice and scholarship neatly separates into four ideal types; rather, I put forward such distinctive perspectives as a means of clarifying what is possible within the service-learning field. Additionally, I acknowledge that such typologies overlap, blend, and are reconstituted in a multiplicity of unanticipated modes. Nevertheless, it is critical that some basic premises and overarching paradigms are delineated to bring greater clarity to service-learning scholarship and practice. Moreover, differentiating such four distinctive conceptualizations of service-learning offers a more robust model for understanding the undergirding assumptions and implications of service-learning. This has, as I will show throughout this and following chapters, numerous implications for how we understand faculty buy-in, student engagement, community involvement, and a host of other critical components of the institutionalization and transformative power of service-learning in higher education.

A Technical Perspective on Service-Learning

A technical perspective on educational reform focuses on "the innovation itself, on its characteristics and component parts and its production and introduction as a technology" (Hargreaves et al. 2002, 73). Questions concerning an innovation's legitimacy and implications are muted or even absent. Rather, technical considerations of implementation are highlighted. Thus questions of efficacy, quality, efficiency, and sustainability of both the process and the outcome of the innovation come to the forefront.

This perspective constitutes a major strand within service-learning scholarship. A host of linkages between service-learning and student outcomes—personal, social, and cognitive—have been analyzed and "best practice" principles have been put forward. Service-learning has been shown to enhance, among other things, students' personal efficacy and moral development, social responsibility and civic engagement, academic learning, transfer of knowledge, and critical thinking skills (Astin and Sax 1998; Astin, Sax, and Avalos 1999; Eyle and Giles 1999; Rhoads and Howard 1998; Markus, Howard and King 1993). Crucial program characteristics of service-learning experiences, irrespective of the academic discipline, include the quality of the placement, the frequency and length of contact hours, the scope and frequency of in-class and out-of-class reflection, the perceived impact of

the service, and students' exposure to and interaction with individuals and community groups of diverse backgrounds (Eyler and Giles 1999; Young et al. 2007).

Service-learning scholars have particularly emphasized the need to link service-learning with enhanced cognitive outcomes as the key to legitimize and sustain service-learning in higher education. Over a decade ago, Zlotkowski (1995) argued that the very future of service-learning within higher education may rest upon "a single elusive but nonetheless basic decision—whether the [service-learning] movement as a whole prioritizes ideological or academic issues" (126). The quantitative linkage of service-learning to such qualities as "deep learning" (NSSE 2007) seems to demonstrate the success of a focus on academics. Thus the phrase "academic service learning" (see, e.g., Rhoads and Howard 1998) has become a symbol of the need to demonstrate how service is a means to learning rather than the goal in and of itself. In one review of the research, Eyler (2000) concludes that "we know that service-learning has a small but consistent impact on a number of important outcomes for students. Now we need to push ahead to empirically answer questions about improving the academic effectiveness of service-learning" (16). Such a "tinkering" approach to educational reform—where the goal is primarily to make a known product better through incremental and systematic change—positions service-learning as a legitimate educational practice in need only of more rigorous and sustained research and operationalization.

A Cultural Perspective on Service-Learning

Rather than focusing on the innovation itself, a cultural perspective emphasizes individuals' meaning-making within and through the context of the innovation. Such meaning-making may be broadly understood within what Geertz (1973) famously termed our "webs of meaning" in that we make sense of who we are with respect to both local and global communities. A cultural perspective—at both the micro/individual and macro/societal level—is thus concerned with normative questions of acculturation, understanding, and appropriation of the innovation.

Service-learning is highly amenable to a cultural perspective. From a macro perspective, it can be viewed as a means of repairing what social theorists describe as the frayed social networks of our increasingly individualistic and narcissistic society (Bellah et al. 1986; Putnam 2000). Advocates suggest that service-learning is an ideal means by which to support and extend civic engagement, foster

democratic renewal, and enhance individuals' sense of community and belongingness to something greater than themselves (Barber 1992; Lisman 1998). From a micro perspective, service-learning can be seen as a means of fostering in the individual a respect for and increased tolerance of diversity, gaining a greater awareness of societal concerns, developing a stronger moral and ethical sense, and encouraging volunteerism and civic engagement (Coles 1993).

These two levels are linked to the extent that we come to know about ourselves by engaging with those who are different from us. Such greater knowledge, in turn, affects how we think about and engage with the world we live in. It is therefore critical to acknowledge that, from a cultural perspective of service-learning, diversity in the placement site acts as a crucial mediator between individual self-knowledge and societal responsibility (Bell et al. 2007). By engaging with those different from themselves—with "difference" primarily understood across racial, ethnic, class, and sexual orientation lines—students will come to better understand, respect, and engage with the cultural plurality of our diverse society (Henry 2005).

This perspective constitutes a second major strand within the service-learning movement and is often linked to the technical perspective. Thus Eyler and Giles (1999) do not hesitate to include citizenship alongside critical thinking as a legitimate student outcome of service-learning. Likewise, the *Service-Learning Course Design Workbook* put out by the Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning (2001) argues that academic service-learning is, by definition, the linkage of meaningful service to academic and civic learning. Such interweaving of the technical and cultural perspectives is in fact ubiquitous in service-learning literature.

Service-learning is thus understood from both perspectives as a particular methodology for accomplishing specific goals. It should be noted that a cultural perspective mitigates somewhat such an instrumentalist conceptualization; a cultural perspective acknowledges that service-learning outcomes are often embedded within the process itself. As such, a cultural perspective privileges the affective, ethical, and formative aspects of service-learning, and is concerned with linking these experiential components to local, national, and international issues.

A Political Perspective on Service-Learning

A political perspective on an innovation is most concerned with issues of competing constituencies and how these issues are manifest through power (im)balances, questions of legitimacy, allowed and/or

silenced perspectives, and negotiations over neutrality/objectivity. It is within a political perspective that an innovation is examined and challenged on normative, ethical, epistemological, and ontological grounds. Whose voices are heard and whose are silenced? Who makes the decisions and by what criteria? Who benefits from such decisions and who loses? To what extent is the innovation a repetition, a reinforcement, or a revocation of the status quo? A political perspective presumes that conflict rather than consensus is an underlying aspect and consequence of the process and product of an innovation such as service-learning.

From a political perspective, service-learning is both potentially transformative and repressive. It is transformative to the extent that education becomes a disruption of the hierarchy and authority of the student-teacher relationship (Freire 1994; hooks 1994). Rather than a didactic "banking model" of knowledge dissemination and regurgitation, education becomes a collaborative venture between students and teachers such that information is constructed rather than simply found (Giroux 1983). Moreover, by leveraging the cultural, social, and human capital of higher education, service-learning practitioners are able to make a visible difference in the communities they are a part of (O'Grady 2000; Cuban and Anderson 2007; Sleeter 2001). This social action creates an opportunity for "border crossing" (Hayes and Cuban 1997) that encourages students, teachers, and community members to question the predominant and hegemonic norms of who controls, defines, and limits access to knowledge and power.

At the same time, a political perspective encourages a reflexive and critical stance toward the foundations and implications of service-learning. It is here that service-learning is found to be a potentially repressive activity, rather than the ameliorative one described from the previous two perspectives. For example, there is little empirical evidence that service-learning provides substantive, meaningful, and long-term solutions for the communities it is supposedly helping. In fact, it may do just the opposite to the extent that it perpetuates and reinforces dominant deficit perspectives of "others" and substantiates the unquestioned norms of whiteness for students engaged in service-learning (Rosenberg 1997; Boyle-Baise 1999; Varlotta 1997a; Sleeter 2001). It is from such a perspective, in fact, that many practitioners and scholars involved in community-based models of teaching and learning balk at the seemingly patronizing label of service-learning as being just that, service (e.g., Schultz 2007).

From such a perspective, service-learning becomes yet another means for those in the "culture of power" to maintain inequitable

power relations under the guise of benevolent volunteerism. It reinforces conservative assumptions that relatively isolated actions of caring individuals can overcome societal problems, that it is the servers who bring the solutions, and that such solutions are assimilationist by nature. Tutoring students or working in a soup kitchen maintains the position of privilege for those doing the serving, and presumes that the enactment of such service in and of itself substantiates the worthiness and legitimacy of the servers' perspective.

It is thus inaccurate to portray, as is often done, a tight linkage between a cultural and a political perspective. Service-learning that enhances students' civic responsibility, for example, does not necessarily also develop a stronger democracy. (There are surely numerous historical examples of totalitarian regimes that prided themselves on citizens' sense of civic responsibility.) Civic engagement that leads to political engagement is one option if the engagement mobilizes silenced communities, fosters neighborhood self-reliance, or dramatically increases individuals' aptitudes to understand and participate in our legal, social, and cultural institutions. Yet another option is that service-learning may simply reinforce students' deficit notions that blames the individual or the so-called culture of poverty for the ills that allowed those students to engage in such service in the first place. This is "drive-by volunteerism" at its worst (Cross 2006). A political perspective thus rejects service-learning as an instrumental and amelioristic methodology to focus instead on how service-learning affects power relations among and across diverse individuals, groups, and institutions.

An Antifoundational Perspective on Service-Learning

An antifoundational perspective on service-learning embraces what Dewey (1910) termed a "forked-road" situation of thoughtfulness to foster doubt concerning the normalcy and neutrality of our seemingly commonsensical view of the world. An antifoundational perspective references the philosophical movement of pragmatist antifoundationalism articulated by, among others, Richard Rorty (1989) and Stanley Fish (1985, 1999). This position argues that there is no neutral, objective, or contentless "foundation" by which we can ever know the "truth" unmediated by our particular condition. Fish (1985) argues:

> [Antifoundationalism] is always historicist; that is, its strategy is always . . . to demonstrate that the norms and standards and rules that foundationalist

> theory would oppose to history, convention, and local practice are in every instance a function or extension of history, convention, and local practice. (112)

Antifoundationalism makes us aware of the always contingent character of our presumptions and truths; there is, in Rorty's terminology, no "god's eye view" by which to adjudicate "the truth." Rather, truths are local, contingent, and intersubjective. An antifoundational perspective of service-learning is thus not directed toward some specific and predetermined end goal (such as better comprehension of microeconomics or openness to diversity). It is instead committed to denying us the (seeming) firmness of our commonsensical assumptions. It is, in Dewey's (1910) evocative phrasing, about the need for individuals to "endure suspense and to undergo the trouble of searching . . . to sustain and protract [a] state of doubt" (14, 16) to become thoughtful and educated citizens.

Put otherwise, the end goal of service-learning from an antifoundational perspective is to avoid an all too easily achieved end goal, such as the closing off of an idea or discussion. Service-learning in this vein is about disrupting the unacknowledged binaries that guide much of our day-to-day thinking and acting to open up the possibility that how we originally viewed the world and ourselves may be too simplistic and stereotypical. This condition of possibility for rethinking our taken-for-granted world is what the educational philosopher Gert Biesta (1998) argues is a "radical undecidability" that cannot simply default into an either/or binary. Framed in this light, service-learning allows us to focus as much on the process of undercutting dualistic ways of thinking as on the product of deliberative and sustainable transformational change.

This may be seen as analogous to postmodernism's "incredulity of metanarratives" (Lyotard 1984): there is no single and objective truth to be found, for all perspectives are beholden to particular presuppositions, contexts, and modes of thought. As such, knowledge and meaning become fragmented and partial. While only a few scholars have employed such an antifoundational or postmodern perspective to analyze service-learning (see Boyle-Baise 1999; Harvey 2000; Himley 2004; Varlotta 1997a, 1997b), antifoundational service-learning appears to align itself well with the multifaceted approach supported by a scholarship of engagement committed to interdisciplinarity and the perspectives of multiple stakeholders (Van den Ven 2007). As I detail in Chapter 3, antifoundational service-learning serves as an entrance into what I term "justice learning" from a position of

doubt rather than certainty. For example, teacher education students may begin to see that a youth labeled "at-risk" in school may be very different in a tutoring environment, at home, or on an outing; a new perspective on multicultural education may be gained by viewing youths' racial and ethnic groupings, subgroupings, and cross-groupings, as well as by hearing youths' own voices and perspectives; the definitional certainty of what constitutes success and failure may be disrupted in the face of the community strength and vibrancy of marginalized groups and the community's own perspective of what constitutes success.

An antifoundational perspective therefore does not presume that service-learning is a fundamentally positive or negative activity. This is not to say that it reflects a radical relativism (Butin 2001). As Foucault (1997) suggested, the "point is not that everything is bad, but that everything is dangerous . . . so my position leads not to apathy but to a hyper- and pessimistic activism" (256). This perspective informs, as I lay out in Chapter 7, a grounding for supporting faculty's differential appropriation and "buying into" service-learning and community engagement.

MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES AND VEXING PROBLEMS IN SERVICE-LEARNING

I have previously detailed (Butin 2005a) how such multiple perspectives may inform a rethinking of specific and deep conundrums in the service-learning field (e.g., the limited community impact, the difficulty of enunciating "best practices" that lead to meaningful outcomes, and the difficulty of the rigorous and authentic assessment of such outcomes). Let me as such simply highlight two of these examples to suggest that many issues, above and beyond the ones outlined here, continue to plague service-learning practice and scholarship precisely because of a lack of multivocality in the definitions, criteria, and conceptualizations of what service-learning is and could be.

The first example is of the limited community impact of service-learning. Cruz and Giles (2000) have noted that the "service-learning research literature to date is almost devoid of research that looks at the community either as a dependent or independent variable" (28). They suggest that this lack is due to the theoretical, methodological, and pragmatic difficulties of rigorously defining and analyzing such constructs as "community" and "community impact." Although certain research (e.g., Gelmon et al. 1998) does suggest that positive community impact accrues from service-learning, the lack of empirical

research seems to serve as a proxy for the traditional lack of institutional emphasis, practitioner awareness, and community organizations' lack of voice with regard to the role of the community (see, though, the work of Randy Stoeker [e.g., 2002, 2003] as an important development to overcome these exact problems).

Put otherwise, a technical perspective of service-learning simply presumes that a lack of community impact need solely be addressed by enhancing additional technical aspects of the service-learning protocol—for example, by increasing time requirements in the placement site, implementing authentic assessment of community impact, and creating stronger partnerships between educational institutions and the community. Yet it is difficult to address the lack of community impact from a unidimensional perspective. Rather, a technical perspective must be linked to a political perspective to ask questions such as: Who benefits from service-learning practice as traditionally enacted? What are the structures that maintain and allow such benefits to accrue?

In doing so, service-learning becomes revealed to be almost universally located within the context of a specific academic course beholden to specific structural constraints: there is a short-term, one-semester time frame to complete activities; there are a limited number of engaged students; there is a complete turnover of the "service" population; the goals of the course are student-centered to the extent that academic learning is a key requirement within the course; service-learning is positioned as an add-on that can easily be put in or taken out of a course; there is a limit to the time that students and teachers can be involved; and the service-learning on the academic side is ultimately associated with a particular individual (namely the professor supporting the service-learning). These structural conditions make clear that service-learning, as a classroom-based practice, privileges the students (and teachers) in a particular course: they gain knowledge and insight; they participate in a quasi-experimental study on the so-called community for academic gain; they feel good about themselves; they gain peer and institutional approval and recognition; and they gain "real world" experience that can be easily put into a résumé.

Once the privileging of a course-based structure is made clear, it becomes possible to rethink the efficacy of different spaces for service-learning, specifically, at the departmental and institutional level. For if the primary goal for service-learning is truly community impact, then the classroom level, with the structural constraints enumerated above, appears to be the least likely to create an impact. At the

departmental level, for example, one could construct linkage and consistency across courses, departmental resources (e.g., administrative support, academic legitimacy) become available, and long-term projects become possible (Berle 2006). At the institutional level, "institutional ownership"—with its access to human, social, and fiscal capital, and its ability to impose and create cultural norms—makes possible an overarching institutional "culture of service." This is the philosophy underpinning the Carnegie Foundation's "community engagement" voluntary classification (Carnegie 2006).

A second issue with a unidimensional perspective is the limited empirical evidence for defining and articulating "best practices" that foster meaningful and substantive student outcomes. Research consistently shows a small but significant increase in academic, social, and personal outcomes due to service-learning. Nevertheless, while researchers have begun to articulate *what* positive outcomes may accrue from service-learning, there is almost no solid research on *how* such outcomes occur.

Reflection, for example, is seen as a key component in service-learning; yet any definition of its duration, scope, placement, mode, and structure remain frustratingly absent. Every teacher of a service-learning course must either implicitly or explicitly decide, among other things, what students should reflect on; how long and how often they should reflect; whether reflection should be in class, out of class, or some combination thereof; what mode of reflection is valid (e.g., monologue, dialogue, performance, written); the level of descriptive, analytic, and reflective detail; and the means by which such reflection will be assessed (e.g., self-, criterion-, or norm-referenced). There is simply no rigorous research of service-learning practice that begins to address this level of detail (I exclude here the proliferation of anecdotal and retrospective self-reporting data).

This issue is, from a technical/cultural perspective, troubling. Without adequate definitions, practitioners cannot develop optimal learning environments for enacting service-learning, researchers cannot rigorously ascertain the "value-added" component of service-learning, and policymakers cannot focus legislative support on "best practices" supported by "scientifically based research." As Furco and Billig (2002) argue, more substantive research is critical to "bring us one step closer to understanding the essence of service-learning" (viii).

Yet an antifoundational perspective argues that there is no such thing as an "essence" of service-learning. There are, instead, truth claims about service-learning that struggle for normative sovereignty and as such produce our identities as service-learning providers or

recipients. The pursuit of "best practices," from an antifoundational perspective, is more clearly understood as a contested construction of social and cultural categories by which we define who we are and what we do.

The point for service-learning is that the quest for definitional certainty has the potential to constrain rather than foster emergent practices. An antifoundational perspective suggests that researchers' attempts to pinpoint the *how* of service-learning privilege quantification and thus normalization. For example, to construct a "best practice" for reflection, no matter the "good intentions," is to move the discussion away from the *usefulness* of reflection in multiple modes and arenas to the *legitimacy* of diverse methodologies by which reflection is enacted.

The clearest example of this mentality is the type of criteria developed by institutions to gauge what constitutes a service-learning course. A course typically "becomes" a service-learning course if it requires students to fulfill a certain number of contact hours in the community and offers an opportunity for the student to reflect on the "value" of the experience through some form of "reflection," either a discussion, journal writing, or essay. The singularly normative implications are to develop specific technical standards—e.g., number of contact hours, type of reflection activity—to which practitioners are then held accountable. But in doing so, such practices constrain and disallow alternative and potentially more fruitful means by which to gauge the usefulness of reflection. Research on the role of reflection in service-learning should be less concerned with issues of how long reflection should be done and more with issues of how reflection may better support self-awareness and self-reflective practice.

Implications of Multiple Perspectives: Service-Learning as Strategy

So if service-learning is not just "a course-based, credit-bearing, educational experience," if it can be viewed and enacted from multiple perspectives, what exactly is it? Let me suggest that it is a strategy. By this I mean that since service-learning can be enacted in multiple ways—technical, cultural, political, or antifoundational—it is a strategic pedagogical and/or philosophical decision. Irrespective of whether such a strategic move is consciously made or not, the means of "doing" service-learning becomes the framework within which to understand the linkage across teaching, learning, and research in the higher education classroom and local community. This is because

service-learning is an experiential activity that is always already a culturally saturated, socially consequential, politically contested, and existentially defining experience.

Service-learning is culturally saturated to the same extent that any other complexly enacted process is in our society. It bears the assumptions and implications of our cultural models, for example, those of growth, progress, individualism, and agency. When I interact with colleagues, give out homework assignments, or watch a playground basketball game, I carry with me all of the (often contradictory) cultural assumptions of my particular local, regional, and national affiliations that impacts what I see, how I see it, and how I interpret it. More forcefully, one cannot separate what we think from who we are. The implications are that service-learning must be "read" as any other cultural practice, for there is no transparent, neutral, and objective position by which anyone and everyone understands what we mean when we say that we "do" service-learning.

Service-learning is socially consequential in the sense that all outcomes of the service-learning process, no matter how great or small, have impact in and on the world. For irrespective of the actual scope, duration, or outcome, all service-learning is done *by* individuals *with* other individuals. Whether this is explored through a social justice perspective (Freire 1994) or through a developmental identity framework (Baxter Magolda 1999; Tatum 1992), one must attend to the consequences of service-learning, from the minutiae of individuals' interpretations to the vastness of an entire community's change.

Service-learning is politically contested in that it is fundamentally an attempt to reframe relations of power. This may be thought of in traditional models of empowering bottom-up change or in more postmodern notions of destabilizing foundational assumptions of knowledge, power, and identity. In either case, service-learning promotes a deviation from the status quo, if only because (at minimum) it just does things differently. On a deeper level, service-learning disturbs our society's penchant for security, order, and control, all of which are presumed to be synonymous with "safety." But as articulated above, service-learning is not safe. It is anything but safe. As such, all interventions that promote such disturbances—to the individual, the institution, or the community—are deemed political and thus contested.

Finally, service-learning is existentially defining because it forces individuals (students, faculty, and community partners) to take a stance. In doing so, individuals must (consciously or not) define themselves by the decisions they make or refuse to make. One cannot

remain neutral when engaging in service-learning. Even the attempt to remain so positions oneself in a particular resistant identity, for it becomes clear that service-learning pulls strongly at the strings that bind us and support us. And in that pulling and pushing, we must as existential beings decide in which direction we will be moved. Do I intervene in an argument between two youth? Do I stand up and speak at the local neighborhood meeting? Do I reveal to my community partner that I may not be here next semester? Every action—even when the decision not to act is taken—reveals and defines (to a lesser or greater extent) who we are and what we believe.

This is why service-learning is a strategy, specifically, a strategy of disturbance. By this I mean that service-learning challenges and decenters our static and singular notions of teaching, learning, and research by moving against the grain of traditional practice in higher education: that is, it is a deeply engaging, local, and impactful practice. This is the "disturbing" part: service-learning is a pedagogical practice and theoretical orientation that provokes us to more carefully examine, rethink, and reenact the visions, policies, and practices of our classrooms and educational institutions; it forces us—as faculty, administrators, and policymakers—to confront the assumptions and implications of the ways in which we teach and learn and conduct scholarship.

And it is a strategy, a pedagogical strategy, because it is a conscious intervention into local and highly complex contexts. Foucault (1997) suggested that one can never escape relations of power and "regimes of truth"; rather, "one escaped from a domination of truth not by playing a game that was totally different from the game of truth but by playing the same game differently, or playing another game, another hand, with other trump cards . . . by showing its consequences, by pointing out that there are other reasonable options" (295–96). A situation that we once took for granted is revealed as fundamentally different once a new goal becomes visible or a hidden presumption is revealed. So if service-learning can reveal the limits of traditional models of teaching, learning, and research, it serves its purpose as a set of "trump cards" to be played.

Put otherwise, service-learning makes us take a stand by acting up and acting out, irrespective of the lens within which we operate. It is much easier to teach within the boundaries of the normal. While I do not suggest that lecture-hall or seminar-style teaching is "easy," I do suggest that such teaching sidesteps and thus suppresses fundamental questions of higher education pedagogy: How is knowledge created and by whom? What is the "usefulness," if any, of disciplinary

knowledge? What is the role of higher education in a liberal democracy? What is the role, moreover, of students, faculty, and institutions in their local and global communities? While the answers will obviously differ across institutions, the questions do not. Put otherwise, the normative silence on pedagogical practice by individual faculty and higher education institutions promotes and perpetuates traditional models of teaching and learning. This privileges top-down presumptions of knowledge transfer from faculty to students and power relations between institutions and community and institutions and faculty. By implementing powerful service-learning programs, individuals must act up the institutional hierarchy.

Likewise, acting out—outside of traditional departments, outside of physical classroom walls, outside of the proximity and "safety" of the academic campus—is a disturbing endeavor on pragmatic, political, and existential grounds. It is extremely difficult to pragmatically implement a powerful service-learning program. It takes foresight, time, organizational capabilities, creativity, networking skills, tolerance for ambiguity, willingness to cede sole control of classroom learning, and an acceptance of long-term rather than immediate increments of progress. It takes convincing—oneself and others—that the boundaries of academic disciplines, classroom walls, and institutional boundaries are socially constructed and thus changeable. Yet, pragmatically speaking, such social constructions create normative pressures, solid walls, and clear institutional structures, all of which must be circumvented or worked through in order to implement service-learning programs.

Service-learning is also politically disturbing for individual faculty. It is a practice that might not be rewarded by traditional tenure and promotion guidelines, that questions (either implicitly or explicitly) colleagues' pedagogical practices, and that has the potential to turn out badly in a very public and glaring way. Given the high-stakes nature of the tenure review process, engaging in a nontraditional methodology is a disheartening proposition for new and junior faculty.

Finally, service-learning is an existentially disturbing endeavor. By this I mean more than an individual's necessary fortitude and courage to confront and overcome the pragmatic and political obstacles to implementing service-learning. I mean that service-learning, when deeply done, subverts some of our dearest foundational assumptions of our sense of identity as higher education faculty. We must rethink the belief that academic knowledge comes directly from us, in a classroom, based on a written text, and assessed objectively. We must acknowledge our students as active, reflective, and resistant agents in

their own educational processes. We must come to terms with the reality that our particular expertise may have very little currency (or even relevance) in the messy and complex world outside our classroom walls.

It may be fruitful to view an analogous field to understand the value of multiple and conflicting perspectives on service-learning and its destabilizing potential. Multicultural education has spent the last thirty years grappling with and developing the distinctions it is premised on (Sleeter and Grant 2003; Banks 1996). The civil rights movements of the 1960s and '70s shattered the ameliorator presumptions of a paternalistic and assimilationist "melting pot" view of educational practices. Instead, multicultural educators developed a host of critical theories premised on fundamentally different assumptions of what counts as multicultural education: ethnic studies perspectives focused on educational practices and norms aligned to the cultural perspectives of those being taught (e.g., queer studies, women's studies, Afrocentric schooling [Asante 1998; Rich 1979]); difference multiculturalists emphasized the diversity of means by which we could think of learning, intelligence, and success (e.g., multiple intelligence [Gardner 1983]); and critical multiculturalists demanded that issues of equity and social justice be at the heart of educational practices (e.g., problem-posing education [Freire 1994]).

Multicultural educators have thus put forward multiple alternative articulations in attempts to rethink and reframe what multicultural education should be premised on and moving toward. Every theoretical strand can be seen as a specific response to specific pedagogical or political problems (e.g., continued lack of equitable outcomes; lack of cultural congruence between students and textbooks).

What is glaring in the service-learning field vis-à-vis multicultural education is the lack of analogous articulations of multiple and distinctive foundational assumptions. Such overreliance on a singular vision, I suggest, discourages a rigorous analysis and critique of the foundational terminology of service-learning for fear of a loss of meaning. Yet without multiple (and competing) foundational premises, the field is beholden to embracing potentially pragmatically limited and theoretically problematic articulations of service-learning.

If service-learning is to avoid becoming overly normalized, we must continuously question and disturb our assumptions, our terms, and our practices. I do this in the next two chapters as a means of rethinking and thus rearticulating service-learning as a form of "justice learning." But one cannot do this solely by claiming that service-learning

is, in and of itself, a type of justice-oriented education. One must clear away the underbrush of existing assumptions to redevelop a new vision.

The next two chapters, as such, disturb the normalizations in place within the service-learning field. Not to do away with them so much as, again following Foucault here, to demonstrate their consequences and how other options may play out. By working through other modes of service-learning in other ways, I hope to open up the field for further questioning and experimentation.

Chapter 3

The Possibilities of Service-Learning

The previous chapter articulated the pedagogical, political, and institutional limits of service-learning in higher education. In this chapter I want to take a final step in the analysis by suggesting that in fact all modes of service-learning are limited, or more precisely, all modes of service-learning are self-undermining. Thus all modes of service-learning not only have external limits; they have internal limits as well. And this, I want to argue, is the most powerful and transformative possibility of service-learning in higher education.

Such an argument may at first appear not just counterintuitive but plain absurd. Yet the key to unraveling and dismissing this absurdity is to first realize and acknowledge that all modes of pedagogy are self-undermining. In fact, most modes of pedagogy are so inherently and fundamentally flawed as to be inoperable. This is not a grandiose claim; it is just a rephrasing of the common wisdom and long-standing research that traditional didactic, lecture-based instruction is the worst form of instruction for the vast majority of our students and for most types of content (Angelo and Cross 1993; Bligh 2000). Put simply, lecturing to a roomful of eighty students has so many internal constraints and self-undermining enactments (such as the inability to gauge whether students understood what you just lectured about) that it is common practice to talk about "teaching to the top twenty percent," irrespective of whether one says this in defeat or in shocked incredulity.

Once it is acknowledged that all forms of pedagogy have their own internal constraints and subversions and that the (strategic) key to

good teaching as such is to align instruction, curriculum, and context, it becomes possible to rethink and reframe the power and potential of service-learning. Specifically, it becomes possible to view the service-learning experience as a nontransparent activity that necessitates a constant undercutting of and attention to the academic content being taught. This, in turn, necessitates the exposure of implicit presumptions and power dynamics within service-learning and content knowledge; it fosters deep, consequential, and long-term experiences within the field; and it fosters an openness to others' voices and perspectives, especially of those within communities partnering with the educational institutions. As I detail in the next section, this allows us to make visible and begin to dismantle what I term the myth of the stable educational experience, the myth of the singular community, and the myth of an agreed-upon justice.

The implications of this for higher education policies, practices, and structures will be detailed in the second part of this book. What is key for the moment is to suggest that service-learning—when properly understood—is an ideal pedagogy for transformation in that it allows (in its antifoundational form) students and faculty an opening and window into its own constraints and subversions. Put otherwise, service-learning—by its very nature of being a community-based, experiential, and embodied experience that is culturally saturated, socially consequential, politically contested, and existentially defining—makes visible the complexity of the content and context of the educational experience.

The transformational potential of service-learning in higher education thus rests in its academic capacity—what I term (and expand upon in the concluding section of this chapter) as "justice in doubt." For service-learning frees us from the false notion of controllable teaching of controlled subject matter, from knowledge as static, and from truth as fixed. This is justice-oriented education in that it allows a hyperengaged and community-based pedagogy that attends to the nontransparent aspect of service-learning under which there is never an educational experience without remainder. By this I mean (as I describe in detail in the next section) that service-learning is never a transparent activity that accomplishes exactly what I as the instructor want it to accomplish. There is always a slippage exactly because of the reality that service-learning is an embodied and experiential activity that cannot be contained—as much teaching and learning attempts to be—within the four walls of the classroom and the covers of the textbook. There are always "remainders" in the experiential experience that subvert our attempted practices.

Such "remainders," as such, pull us up short in our seeming attempts to simply and consistently and with statistical significance move always toward greater cultural competence or equity. I acknowledge that these are deeply important goals for our students, colleges, and communities. Nevertheless, as I will detail, such seemingly clear-cut perspectives actually obscure and thus all too often obfuscate the immensely complex and contested issues of community engagement in our pluralistic democracy. Put otherwise, and as I have shown in the previous chapter, the seemingly direct "strong overcoming" of students' lack of content knowledge, cultural competence, or sense of social justice may in fact face much greater barriers and a lower "ceiling" for success.

It may thus be necessary to speak more of a "weak overcoming" (Butin 2002) that acknowledges the always inherent tensions and slippages of our service-learning practices to move toward a more realistic, and ultimately, more justice-centered vision and practice of our community-based engagements. This may be deflationary for grand claims, but it is empowering for sustained theories and practices that can truly work. As such, this chapter argues that most traditional modes of service-learning are inadequate for truly fulfilling their goals. I thus document how most modes of service-learning are self-undermining in relation to their explicit goals as they do not fulfill the theoretical or pedagogical conditions they themselves have set. Specifically, I demonstrate that each mode of service-learning already has within itself the condition of its own subversion.

Several implications arise from this explication: first, that different modes of service-learning have distinctly different pedagogical and theoretical limits; second, that such internal self-subversions function as the upper limit cases (the "ceiling") for deeply embedding service-learning in higher education; third, that the hoped-for fulfillment of liberal- and justice-oriented claims may be overreaching and out of reach for most service-learning models; fourth, and finally, that through this rearticulation it becomes possible to rethink the potential of service-learning as well as to recreate the means by which higher education deeply institutionalizes service-learning within the academy.

I begin by explicating how each mode of service-learning—the technical, cultural, and political—is undermined at both the level of its performance and at its very condition of possibility. I then suggest that such self-undermining must be—if not embraced—at least acknowledged and worked through in service-learning practice. I provide two specific examples of service-learning practices that demonstrate and

enact such a vision of service-learning. I then conclude this chapter by focusing on the implications of such practices for fostering deeper engagement and awareness of a community's voice.

THE LIMIT CASES, PERFORMATIVE CONTRADICTIONS, AND INTERNAL SUBVERSIONS OF SERVICE-LEARNING

I use my previously articulated conceptualizations of service-learning—technical, cultural, and political—as the lens through which to examine each mode's self-subversion and limit. I do so because traditional models (e.g., Bringle and Hatcher 1995; Furco 1996; MJCSL 2001; NCSL 2002; Hayes and Cuban 1997; O'Grady 2000; Westheimer and Kahne 2004) have multiple theoretical problems that cannot be supported—normative teleology, ethical foundationalism, a stage theory model of individual progress from charity to justice—and obscure more than they reveal, particularly in regard to how faculty actually think about, make use of, and connote value judgments for service-learning.

As I discussed earlier, a *technical* conceptualization of service-learning is focused on its pedagogical effectiveness whereby it is one amongst many pedagogical strategies that serve the function of better teaching for better learning: for example, an excellent way to teach about the impact of poverty on families is to work with actual families in actual poverty within the context of an academic course that uses multiple other texts, reflections, and assignments related to the topic.

A *cultural* conceptualization is focused on the meanings of the practice for the individuals and institutions involved so that, for example, service-learning may be seen as a means to help students increase their tolerance and respect for diversity and for academic institutions to promote engaged citizenship. It is, by the way, this differentiation (and tension) between the civic and the academic that is at the heart of contemporary debates about the role that service-learning can play in the mission of higher education. Advocates suggest an expansive view that embraces community engagement and the civic-minded implications thereof (see, e.g., Benson et al. 2007; Bok 2005; Colby et al. 2003), and critics argue that the academy should attend to its primary mission of knowledge production and dissemination and not dabble in volunteerism (Fish 2008; Neidorf 2005).

Finally, a *political* conceptualization is focused on the promotion and empowerment of the voices and practices of historically disempowered

and nondominant groups in society. This perspective animates and informs the service-learning movement; it is also, though, the most contentious given recent controversies over the need for "balance" in the curriculum and the seeming lack of "academic diversity" in higher education due to the liberal and radical leanings of the professoriate. It is here that the distinction between cultural and political perspectives is brought into sharpest relief: civic engagement (e.g., voting, volunteering) is made of eminently cultural practices that are embraced by higher education leaders and funded by federal grants; activism and "social justice," though, are deeply contested political notions that incite litigation and censure by these very same constituencies (see, e.g., ACTA, 2006).

It should be noted that any particular service-learning practice can have aspects of all three types. The semester-long tutoring of underperforming high school students in math can help college students understand how youth make systematic conceptual errors (a technical perspective); students can gain insight into working with youth of a different socioeconomic status and/or ethnic background (a cultural perspective); and they can explicitly link the tutoring with college preparation to support college admission of such underrepresented youth (a political perspective). Additionally, as will be highlighted in depth later on, all three modes are of the same "kind" in that they all view service-learning as a type of intervention that facilitates a better process toward reaching a specific predetermined goal, be it comprehension of math, cultural competence, or more equitable access to scarce resources.

A final note is that my analysis of the internal subversions within service-learning does not examine the antifoundational perspective outlined in the first chapter. This is because—to put it quickly and simply for now—antifoundational service-learning is not encumbered by the myth of its own transparency. This does not mean that antifoundational service-learning is free of internal subversions and limits. It is just that it is the only one of the four outlined perspectives that acknowledges and works through, rather than against, such subversions and limits. This distinction will become clear at the conclusion of this chapter, and will be expanded upon in the second part of this book in general and in Chapter 7 in specific.

The rest of this chapter traces how each mode of service-learning bears its own subversion and limits. Figure 3.1 provides an overview. The key to note is that each mode of service-learning has an explicit goal—be it conveying content, fostering diversity, or enhancing equity and tolerance—that is undercut by the very nature of the service-learning

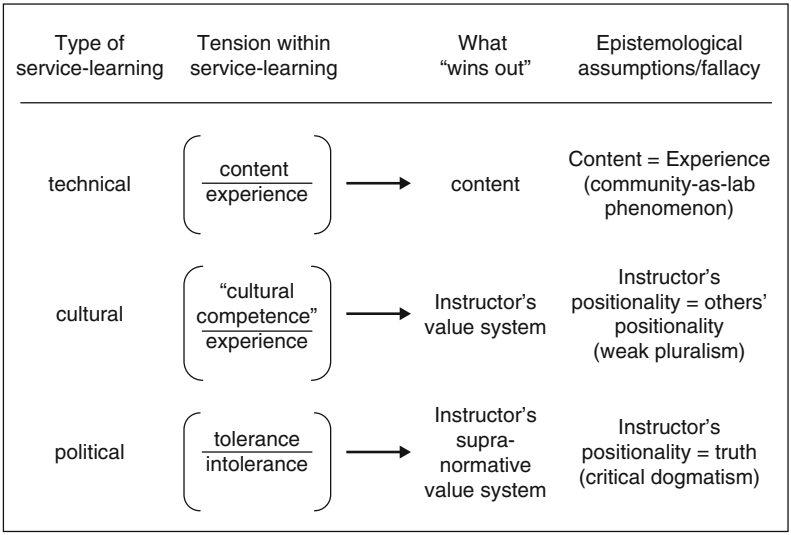

Figure 3.1 The limits and subversions of service-learning practices

process as a community-based, experiential, and embodied experience. In each case the service-learning mode is beholden to an internal fallacy that functions as the limiting factor for the potential and power of the service-learning experience.

Thus, to briefly summarize the first situation, an instructor working from a technical perspective presumes that the experience within service-learning is equivalent to and in support of the content knowledge being taught. This is what I term the myth of the stable experience; that is to say, what students do in the field always and without remainder maps onto the course's content knowledge. Yet "content" and "experience" operate within an implicit and hierarchical binary, with content knowledge "higher than" and thus winning out over the experience. Such an occurrence operates within what has come to be viewed as the standard problematic of "community-as-lab": institutions of higher education simply entering and leaving communities to suit themselves and their goals and prerogatives. As I will show below, each mode of service-learning practice has its own tensions that ultimately subvert any simple attempts to use service-learning as a transparent practice without remainder.

Before moving forward to deeply explicate each type of service-learning, it is necessary to heuristically differentiate between the performance of service-learning and the condition of possibility that

makes particular performances possible. Service-learning has been embraced in higher education exactly because it is a community-based, experiential, and embodied activity. It is seen as a pedagogical method by which to move beyond the walls of the classroom and the covers of the textbook to incite and excite students about the deep complexities and controversies of our world. This is its condition of possibility. Such a condition of possibility, in turn, has been taken up (i.e., performed) in different ways and with different goals. What I show in this section is that each model of service-learning has distinctive limits; each goal is undone since the performance and/or the condition of possibility of such a performance carry within themselves the subversion of the attempted performance.

The theoretical grounding of this argument comes from Derrida's (1976) notion of *différance*. My interest here is not specifically in Derridean notions of meaning or postmodern interpretations of teaching (see, for this, Biesta 1998, 2006; Biesta and Burbulles 2003; Bingham 2008). Rather, it is to simply take up a key insight of antifoundational work that the "content" (be that the text, the teacher, or the field-based experience) can never truly and totally "erase" itself to allow the content to speak for itself. In fact, the very attempted act of erasure (e.g., believing the text or teacher is neutral and/or transparent) propels the undercutting and subversion of the attempted goal.

In a technical perspective, the performance of service-learning is undermined by its inherent condition of fostering engagement with real-world issues in real time. This is, again, the myth of the stable experience in service-learning. For example, an instructor in a mathematics course may assign students to engage in math tutoring at a local elementary school to demonstrate the conceptual errors that youth make at different developmental stages. It is thus hoped that the service-learning experience will be aligned with (without remainder) the course content. Yet all experiences are polyvocal. The undergraduate students may begin to ask why girls seem to be less motivated than boys and why some youth (and perhaps even teachers) perpetuate stereotypes of who is good in math and who is not, or students may want to make connections to their own math phobias as youngsters. Each of these scenarios demonstrates a possible "remainder" that is present above and beyond the supposed content knowledge being taught.

Each of these potential issues may of course be inherently interesting and academically important, but just not for this particular course. Instructors must then make difficult decisions as to whether to delve

into academic fields (e.g., gender bias in the classroom) that may be far from their expertise, to ignore or minimize such discussions and risk disenfranchising interested students, or to develop entirely new readings that cut into the already planned curriculum. When any of these scenarios occur, the instructor's initial desire for better teaching of content knowledge will trump the (seemingly errant) experiences brought into class. After all, faculty who bought into a technical model of service-learning did so exactly because they wanted a more effective pedagogical methodology for conveying their content matter. As soon as the particular pedagogical methodology is no longer effective (since it takes up precious classroom time to discuss math phobias or cultural stereotypes concerning girls' success in math), it is of no use for the faculty's end goal. This is just as true of PowerPoint and project-based learning as it is of service-learning. When we as teachers find certain teaching strategies not working, we stop using them.

Flowers and Temple (2009) offer a vivid account of such a dilemma—they had attempted to prepare their undergraduate students to tutor through an America Reads program in a literacy course. The key tension, they suggest, was the "extensive need to train students to be effective tutors . . . how much time should the students spend in class learning to be tutors? The course on literacy is a broadly based liberal arts course and not a training program" (91). The problem, of course, is that neglecting the "training" component can seriously shortchange the very reason for doing the service-learning in the first place: helping the youth being tutored. "In order for the literacy course to serve the America Reads program well—and also to be prepared for tutoring the students in class—we have had to devote much class time to teaching and assessment matters, and we have devoted less time to other topics" (102). At some point, as course content gets shortchanged, faculty may say, much like Flowers and Temple (2009), "But there is never enough time" (102), and as such move away from their original intent of offering such a service-learning experience.

The reason for the implosion of the performance of service-learning from a technical perspective—where experience is trumped by content knowledge—is also in this case at the heart of the limit of its condition of possibility. For in the technical perspective, the instructor must implicitly conflate the service-learning experience with the hoped-for course content. An instructor may believe that teaching math to elementary school students will help her undergraduates better understand how youth make conceptual errors at different developmental

stages. Experience, from this perspective, equals content. Yet this conflation is actually predicated on the construction of and reliance upon an implicit and hierarchical binary made of the course content and the service-learning experience.

The experience is implicitly understood to be in the service of and inferior to the overarching goal of content knowledge acquisition. When the means (of service-learning) undercut the goal (of content knowledge acquisition), the binary is revealed. Put otherwise, a technical perspective—by its very nature of focusing on particular content knowledge—is inherently open to being undermined at the level of performance and in the very condition of possibility by the culturally saturated service-learning experience. The instructor may, of course, take up the culturally saturated issues raised by the service-learning experience, but then she is no longer teaching from a technical perspective, and, as such, must attend to the issues raised by whichever other perspective she takes up.

Instructors working from a cultural perspective face an analogous dilemma of inherent "cracks" both in the empirical performance of the service-learning experience and in its conditions of possibility. On the empirical performative level, the very experience which, it is hoped, will foster an openness to the diversity and plurality of local and global communities may in fact reinforce students' deficit perspectives on the other. Students volunteering in a homeless shelter may see their worst stereotypes reinforced by violent, sexist, or demeaning behavior. They may now have "data," however anecdotal, that supports their predetermined convictions. This is what I term the myth of the singular community.

The hoped-for openness and understanding envisioned by a cultural model of service-learning thus stops at the limits of its own openness and understanding. Specifically, the experiences in the community may be antithetical to the knowledge, skills, and dispositions we as faculty are attempting to foster: when *we* believe in letting children speak and the family being visited believes that children should be seen and not heard; when *we* believe that women have control over their own bodies and the community organization one is volunteering in tells callers that only God has the right to kill a fetus; when *we* believe that skin color is an irrelevant basis by which to judge others and the youth one is tutoring continue to refer to each other in what we consider to be highly derogatory terms. Such culturally saturated experiences force faculty to confront the limits of their control over what students are exposed to, and, as such, over what can and cannot be taught through such a service-learning experience.

Stoecker and Tryon (2009) found such situations all too common when they interviewed community organizations about working with service-learning courses at the University of Wisconsin at Madison. Stoecker and Tryon (2009) comment that "community organizations, of course, do not expect the people they serve to be an expandable source of student enlightenment," and then quote a community leader stating that "people have to be able to come here [the service organization] and expect nondiscriminatory service, whether they are a white supremacist or a lesbian couple. So people who can't show professional objectivity can't volunteer here" (123).

This is a classic case of weak pluralism, or what Stanley Fish (1999) terms "boutique multiculturalism"; he characterizes the phenomenon and its self-corrosion as follows:

> Boutique multiculturalism is characterized by its superficial or cosmetic relationship to the objects of its affection. Boutique multiculturalists admire or appreciate or enjoy or sympathize with or (at the very least) "recognize the legitimacy of" the traditions of cultures other than their own; but boutique multiculturalists will always stop short of approving other cultures at a point where some value at their center generates an act that offends against canons of civilized decency as they have been either declared or assumed. (56)

A cultural model of service-learning thus only functions by erasing its very own positionality until it is caught up short by encountering an experiential situation that forces it to acknowledge its own limits. This is the implosion encountered at the level of the condition of possibility. As Fish (1999) continues, the boutique multiculturalist "does not and cannot take seriously the core values of the cultures he tolerates. The reason he cannot is that he does not see those values as truly 'core' but as overlays on a substratum of essential humanity" (57). Tolerance to other perspectives functions so long as the encountered perspectives mirror one's own internal (and hidden) norms. As soon as this boundary is crossed, the potential for a cultural perspective of service-learning collapses.

Thus we may *want* to believe that children should have a chance to articulate their perspectives and in general their voices be valued and heard. But this becomes more than problematic when the host family disagrees, or more strongly, complains to the volunteer coordinator of a college student's interference in family matters. It becomes an undermining of the very goals of openness that the instructor was attempting to foster. In the face of such resistance (implicit and/or explicit) from the community, it becomes impossible for the

instructor to continue positioning such goals and ideals as common or universal.

Thus whereas the technical perspective functioned through an implicit content/experience binary, the cultural perspective functions through an implicit and hierarchical binary between the instructor's and the community's key principles in their respective value systems. Thus the instructor who believes her goals (of implicitly teaching a particular value system) are undermined (by the divergent value systems encountered in the service-learning experience) will of necessity stop using the means she had originally been using. This process of subversion, it should be noted, functions exactly in the same manner for both the technical and the cultural mode of service-learning. And, again, it is worth noting that if the instructor is in fact prodded by the community's value system to rethink her own principles and thus reposition her course goals, she will no longer be doing cultural service-learning but something different.

Finally, a political perspective is undone at both the performative level and in its condition of possibility by a "critical dogmatism" that leaves unquestioned its own foundational underpinning that discounts alternative perspectives. This is what I term the myth of an agreed-upon justice. On a performative level, such a political perspective is undermined by its explicit embrace of a distinctively partisan orientation. The linkage of service-learning to social justice inherently presumes a dichotomous liberal/conservative spectrum with service-learning meant to function as a mechanism to move individuals from the (political) right to the (social justice) left. This is traditionally described as helping students move from individualistic to structural understandings of societal problems, and from passive acceptance to collective action.

Yet the very explicitness of such an agenda incites responses such as the ones I outlined in the previous chapter (e.g., David Horowitz's "academic bill of rights") in that students have just as much "academic freedom" to learn alternative perspectives as faculty have to teach a singular "truth." This counterdemand for "balance" derives exactly because conservatives believe that college students are only being exposed to one side of the academic story and, as such, should be allowed to be taught "the controversy" rather than be "indoctrinated" by distinctly liberal and radical perspectives. The performance of service-learning from a political perspective thus creates the condition for its own undoing, since it radicalizes dialogue as between extremes.

The performance of service-learning from a political perspective, it should also be pointed out, is pedagogically suspect. As Dewey (1938) once whimsically noted, "frontal attacks are even more wasteful in learning than in war" (176). By attempting to directly "deposit" the "correct" knowledge in students, a political perspective risks undermining its own goals by fostering student resistance to the process of being educated.

A political perspective of service-learning is undermined at the level of its condition of possibility due to two implicit and nested binaries. The first binary is analogous to and a stronger version of boutique multiculturalism. Namely, a political perspective of service-learning is what Fish would term a "strong multiculturalist" one because it takes as its first principle not simply a taken-for-granted "humanism," but the very core of such a presumption: tolerance. Thus, for example, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) will defend the free speech rights of organizations (such as the Ku Klux Klan) that it may vehemently disagree with and even abhor. Yet, Fish argues, such tolerance and respect for diversity always meets a limit case whereby it cannot accept the founding conditions of the other. As Fish points out:

> The trouble with stipulating tolerance as your first principle, however, is that you cannot possibly be faithful to it because sooner or later the culture whose values you are tolerating will reveal itself to be intolerant at that same core . . . Confronted with a demand that it [the "tolerant" culture] surrender its viewpoint or enlarge it to include the practices of its natural enemies—other religions, other races, other genders, other classes—a beleaguered culture will fight back with everything from discriminatory legislation to violence. (60–61)

This is a lose-lose situation for the strong multiculturalist, for she either has to be tolerant and embrace a culture that is intolerant and as such, by implication, be intolerant to the others who are being oppressed by the intolerant culture; or she must condemn, from some supranormative position, the intolerant culture that is in fact being intolerant and show that this will not be accepted. In either case, Fish points out, "it turns out that strong multiculturalism is not a distinct position but a somewhat deeper instance of the shallow category of boutique multiculturalism" (61).

The only differentiation, and this is one of degree rather than kind, is that the strong multiculturalist makes explicit her critical dogmatism. And this is the second binary. For the strong multiculturalist who engages in service-learning from a political perspective

must by necessity always appeal to a supranormative position that is deemed both beyond critique and inherently superior to all other positions that may challenge such a positioning. When a faculty member assigns a community-based project that is deemed to support the goals of social justice, she, by necessity, must believe that her vision of social justice is accurate; else, why have her students engage in such practices?

Nonetheless, as Biesta (1998) demonstrates, such a stance of strong multiculturalism that engages in critical dogmatism—a criticism that functions by a criterion (e.g., "social justice," "emancipation") that is itself "kept out of reach of the critical operation" (7)—is by its very definition subverted by itself. For critical dogmatism must either succumb to an "infinite regress" whereby its foundational conditions must always be questionable, a "logical circle" in that all justifications for critique or rationale for specific criteria are always already in need of being justified, or a "breaking off the attempt [of justification] at a particular point by *dogmatically* installing a foundation" (8).

If I believe in "tolerance" as my first principle (or "justice" or any other so-called neutral principle that Fish showed as functioning as an "empty vessel"), I must either consistently (and infinitely and regressively) find undergirding foundations that, through questioning and critique, can only be supported by ever deeper foundations for tolerance; or by referring to other seeming first principles (e.g., "justice," "human rights") that spiral back onto themselves; or by simply and finally—caught in such regressive loops—stating with a finality that allows no exterior questioning that "tolerance" must serve as the "true" foundation. The very idea of service-learning for social justice, in other words, collapses under its own presumptions.

So when I as a faculty member am attempting to teach social justice, and the very way I do so instead leads to demands for "balance" from external constituencies, incites resistance by my own students, and is confounded by others out in the community who have their own first principles of (what I deem as) intolerance, I must retreat and find new ways by which to accomplish my goals. I thus drop service-learning. So, again, the very means of attempting to get to a predetermined goal confound the attempt, thus forcing the abandonment of allegiance to service-learning as the pedagogical "delivery mechanism" of choice. And, again, if the instructor is somehow, through the service-learning experience, convinced that she is no longer superior, she is also no longer doing political service-learning.

It should by now be (painfully) obvious that all three modes of service-learning—technical, cultural, and political—are undermined at both

the level of performance and in the very condition of possibility of the performance. Moreover, such undoing functions in the exact same fashion for all three modes. Namely, what was originally considered an ideal methodology turns out to be not just idealized, but unreachable. The epistemic certainty with which service-learning was engaged and that stood at the heart of the decision—that content and experience were aligned (from a technical perspective); that faculty and community principles were congruent (from a cultural perspective); that first principles were not only the same but mirrored the faculty's own foundational presumptions (from a political perspective)—turns out to be the very place where the subversion begins.

Service-learning, in other words, is subverted from the inside out. And it is here, I suggest, that we must begin to look for ways to engage service-learning with fewer opportunities for being beguiled by the illusion that service-learning is an answer; it is instead, as I have noted, a "weak overcoming."

Turning Service-Learning Inside Out

It is worth repeating that there is no unadulterated and "pure" form of service-learning free from the limits and subversions I have just explicated. Indeed, there are no other ways of "doing" service-learning except through the technical, cultural, and political perspectives of service-learning that I have examined. But I suggest it is possible to begin at exactly the conditions of possibilities that are otherwise ignored. By beginning with the realization that service-learning—in its very performance as a community-based, experiential, and embodied experience—is disturbing, it becomes possible to work with this process of undoing rather than simply be undone by it. This process, it turns out, has a somewhat off-centering function in that what occurs is not just simply a technical, cultural, or political end result. But I am getting ahead of myself. Let me offer two performances as an example.

The first example comes from the field of criminal justice. Lori Pompa (2005) developed the Inside-Out Prison Exchange Program over a decade ago at Temple University, Philadelphia. Pompa brings together undergraduates (the "outside" students) and incarcerated men (the "inside" students) at a maximum security prison within the context of a semester-long academic course. Both groups work together on texts concerning, for example, the criminal justice system, deviancy, restorative justice, and ethics. This working *with*, rather than working *for*, the incarcerated men offers undergraduates authentic

and intentional pedagogical encounters that force students to make explicit their assumptions on prisons, crime, and punishment and analyze them. It also offers the incarcerated men the opportunity to further their education and begin to better understand their particular situations within a larger theoretical context.

Pompa (2005) deliberately modified her initial course from monthly visits to the prison to a fully engaging experience: "Having class inside a prison is compelling—an experience that's hard to shake. And that is one reason we do it. I don't want my students to shake these encounters easily; in fact, I want the students to be shaken *by* them" (302). Central to the experience is that the inside and outside students, once together, encounter each other as equal dialogue partners concerning the specific issues and texts of the day. This type of experience is highly disturbing to undergraduates used to either passively absorbing knowledge or, in the case of traditional social activism strategies, being the "givers" or "servers." As Pompa states, "In taking class together as equals, borders disintegrate and barriers recede. What emerges is the possibility of considering the subject matter from a new context—that of those living within that context" (305).

A second example comes from political science. Susan Dicklitch (2005) developed a course at Franklin and Marshall College entitled *Human Rights-Human Wrongs* that explored issues of human rights in general and the United States' asylum policies in particular. Students served as researchers for community partner organizations on asylum seekers' cases at York County Prison, Pennsylvania, the second largest detention center in the United States for asylum cases to be decided by the Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services and the Department of Homeland Security. Through interviews with the detainees (who come primarily from sub-Saharan Africa and Central America) and intensive research on immigration policies, human rights theory, case law, and the specific situations of each asylum seeker's story and country of origin, students created culminating immigration-court-ready documents and legal briefs for the detainees.

Since most detainees could not afford a lawyer (nor were they entitled to the equivalent of a public defender), had limited English proficiency, and were completely unfamiliar with U.S. immigration laws, Dicklitch's students were oftentimes detainees' sole link to any form of legal representation. It is important to note that students were not attempting to simply free these detainees; some detainees had falsified their background and others' situations did not meet the

federal requirements for asylum. What is of relevance is the nature of the learning:

> Students did not have to be pushed and prodded to do their work. This is because this course had more than just the traditional course pressures i.e., getting a good grade, being able to answer professor's questions, not letting down the community partner. The students knew that if they did not put in the time to properly research their asylum seeker's story, case law, and find evidence in human rights reports to substantiate the claims, their asylum seeker would most likely get deported. And, if in fact the asylum seeker was telling the truth about his/her human rights abuse, deportation could mean further torture, abuse, or even death. Other human beings, from different cultures, speaking different languages, living completely different realities were depending on my students to make sure that their story got heard. (132)

The impact on students and on the asylum seekers has been profound. To date, six out of the twenty-eight cases have been granted asylum, the others have either been denied or are still under appeal (these are impressive numbers given that the national asylum grant rate is fewer than one in five). Most vividly, one of the detainees who was granted asylum came and spoke to Dicklitch's class upon being released: "Without the student's help, I would not be standing in front of you now, free, telling you my story" (37n10).

These examples, I suggest, demonstrate a type of service-learning that embraces and works with the internal subversions of its own practices. The situations students encountered necessitated reflection, analysis, and action exactly because students had to work within and through the experience's attempted subversions. In fact, the service-learning experience was the subversion; walking into a prison or listening to a detainee's story functioned as both the content of the course and the disruption to the students and the course that itself (the disruption) functioned as the content. Thus rather than attempting to construct a transparent service-learning experience without remainder, both of these courses embraced the "remainders" of the course—i.e., being shaken up by the slamming prison gates, being lied to by the detainee—as an integral component of understanding the issues and content at stake within the academic examination of the issues under analysis.

For Pompa, outside students were shaken up such that they had to ask fundamental questions (e.g., "who are prisoners?" "what is crime?" "when is justice served?" "what is freedom?") and at the same time engage with the inside students sitting side-by-side with them to discuss,

for example, Sartre, and learn how to "do time" rather than time "doing them." For Dicklitch, students had to parse and weigh detainees' stories within (at minimum) the context of international law, local customs of the detainees' home countries, the internal consistency and integrity of the story told, and potential cross-cultural miscommunication, all the while aware that this was a real-life situation playing out in real time with real consequences. Not only did Dicklitch's undergraduates have to internally struggle with the reality that asylum seekers were explaining why death may be the end result of deportation, while they themselves were soon to return to their dorm rooms, such incongruities themselves had to be explicitly grappled within the class vis-à-vis issues of ethics, procedural justice, and immigration law.

The point here is that no type of service-learning—technical, cultural, or political—can function without remainder; that is, no service-learning course can stay "true" to its seemingly direct and transparent goals. If Pompa had wanted, from a technical perspective, to better teach about prison conditions, prison rights, and criminal justice, the multiplicity of seemingly tangential issues that cropped up in a prison visit or encounter might have overwhelmed her predetermined and focused goals for covering particular content knowledge. In fact, no matter how wide-ranging and broad her syllabus may have been, it would have been impossible to presume and prepare for all of the contingencies and situations encountered within the prison experience. Thus Pompa could have attempted to ignore and avoid such "tangential" issues; she could have embraced such "teachable moments"; or she could have cut back on such experiences to focus her class on the relevant coursework issues. But in all of these scenarios, the technical focus of the service-learning would have been undermined.

Likewise, if Pompa or Dicklitch had wanted to primarily teach through cultural or political modes of service-learning about, respectively, openness to difference or to advocate for the human rights of the oppressed (be it of prisoners or detainees), the goals would have been subverted and undermined as well. Pompa's outside students could not ignore or avoid that they were sitting next to individuals incarcerated for crimes such as murder and rape. Dicklitch's students could not avoid or ignore that some detainees were lying about their situations to remain in the United States. And neither Pompa nor Dicklitch could control or prevent prisoners and detainees from making provocative and intolerant statements or holding views antithetical to themselves or undergraduates. If allowed to function on their own, such statements and first principles would have undermined the instructors' goals. And, again, the instructor would have either had to retreat from the content,

the experience, or her own principles and goals. The service-learning experience would not have functioned as planned.

These two examples of service-learning practices may be extreme in their depth and complexity. But they reveal that service-learning is never transparent nor without remainder. The myth of transparency is in fact what ultimately serves to undermine and disrupt the service-learning experience. From a technical perspective it is the seeming transparency of the experience as fulfilling the goals of content acquisition that undermines the experience. From a cultural perspective it is the seeming transparency of the experience of the community's positionality as mirroring the instructor's and course's cultural and ethical positionality. From a political perspective it is the seeming transparency of the notion of social justice as supranormative and mirroring, again, the instructor's and course's cultural and ethical positionality.

But, as I have shown, it is not possible to have a pure mode of service-learning that does not "slip" from its goals given the context within which it is being played out. And neither Pompa nor Dicklitch presume that one can do service-learning without slippage. Or more precisely, both Pompa and Dicklitch employ pedagogical strategies through the service-learning experience that presumes that nothing within the academic course is self-evident or without remainder. All components must be examined, questioned, and reintegrated into the academic content and experiential component. (I should note that Pompa and Dicklitch may in fact have a different hermeneutics to explain what they do [see, e.g., Pompa, 2002]; this, though, does not obviate my own hermeneutical appropriation and explication of their strategic moves.)

There are multiple implications of such a type of service-learning that become operationalized in important ways in the fostering of students and faculty buying into it, in the engagement of community voices, and the structuring and scaffolding of service-learning experiences. I explore these in depth in Chapter 7. For now it is adequate to conclude with the implication that it is only through doubt that justice becomes appropriate. Understanding how service-learning operates through and within subversions allows us to understand the potential of service-learning as justice-oriented education and what I term as "justice in doubt."

TOWARD A CONCLUSION ON THE VALUE OF JUSTICE IN DOUBT

I have attempted to show that traditional models of service-learning are fundamentally limited. Such limits, moreover, reside in the very

essence of their respective performances and serve to undercut the hoped-for goals initially articulated by each model of service-learning. Service-learning is disturbing its own goals and aspirations at the very level of its condition of possibility and performance. More specifically, all traditional models are operating within the context of an epistemic certainty that presumes (wrongly, it turns out) a particular intervention is the best means toward a particular and predefined goal.

Yet this chapter has suggested that there is no such thing as the surety and transparency of the service-learning experience. What Pompa and Dicklitch constructed is an antifoundational service-learning that works within and through an epistemic doubt that must constantly examine and take account of its own foundations and operations. To put it simply, antifoundational service-learning operates from the presumption of service-learning-as-question rather than service-learning-as-answer. To believe in the transparency of service-learning is to believe that in engaging in the service-learning experience is to gain a particular answer in a particular way. What I hope I have shown instead is that it is possible to foster truths and answers, but only as by-products of the service-learning experience that works by questioning answers rather than answering questions.

This is "justice in doubt." By this I do not just mean the seeming play of words that our goals of justice-oriented education may never be reached. This is in fact the case in that we can never truly control what students leave our courses believing. And this is what Fish (2003) meant when he wrote about "aiming low" in our goals and expectations of what can and cannot be taught in the college classroom (and which I take up in detail in Chapter 7). But more specifically, I mean that one cannot approach complex and contested notions that are culturally saturated, politically volatile, and existentially defining without a constant and careful vigilance regarding the falsehoods of surety and the transparency of the (so-called) truth.

A final analogy may be applicable as it relates to Pompa's *Inside-Out* program. The fostering of doubt through Pompa's service-learning experience in the prisons is meant to better understand the complexities of the criminal justice system. It is not meant to trivialize or foster a radical relativism about crime, punishment, or justice. Pompa does not expect nor suggest that her undergraduates leave her course believing that all "lifers" should be immediately pardoned. Antifoundational service-learning is rather about dismantling implicit and thus oppressive binaries.

In 1971 Foucault joined several other French intellectuals to form the Prison Information Group. Its goal, Foucault argued, was not prison reform:

> The ultimate goal of its interventions was not to extend the visiting rights of prisoners to thirty minutes or to procure flush toilets for the cells, but to question the social and moral distinction between the innocent and the guilty . . . Confronted by the penal system, the humanist would say: "The guilty are guilty and the innocent are innocent. Nevertheless, the convict is a man like any other and society must respect what is human in him: consequently, flush toilets!" Our action, on the contrary, isn't concerned with the soul or the man behind the convict, but it seeks to obliterate the deep division that lies between innocence and guilt . . . If it were a question of raising consciousness, we could simply publish newspapers and books, or attempt to win over a radio or television producer. We wish to attack an institution at the point where it culminates and reveals itself in a simple and basic ideology, in the notions of good and evil, innocence and guilt.
>
> (Foucault 1977, 227–28)

The group's "attack" was to give prisoners a platform by which they could articulate their living conditions, such as the lack of visitation rights and flush toilets. This act exploded the good/evil and innocent/guilty binaries by exposing and undercutting the assumption that only the good and innocent speak. It is crucial to note that Foucault's goal was not to endorse the outcomes of such speech; he was interested in the fact that such speech, in and of itself, broke the calcification of a unidirectional relation of power between the penal institution and its prisoners. The ability to speak was a reversal in the relations of power that, it just so happened, actually fostered a dramatic improvement in prisoners' treatment at the time.

In a similar fashion, Pompa wants the service-learning experience—through the slamming prison gates and the inside students' reflection on "doing time"—to shake up the binaries that outside students may have about the criminal justice system. This may not, in and of itself, get her students to any predetermined outcomes about the content knowledge under examination, the cultural openness hoped for by liberal advocates, or the political overturning of an "oppressive" system. What it will do is to reveal the "deep divisions" within which and through which we think about the content knowledge, cultural openness, and oppression found within, in this case, the criminal justice system.

Such types of service-learning, though, are difficult to implement and sustain. It is, as such, that the next part of this book explores several alternative models by which to structure, sustain, and institutionalize service-learning within academic programs. For at the heart of a pedagogic strategy of doubt lies a model of critical thinking found within each and every academic discipline: the careful and critical attention to the viewing and understanding of the world through distinct paradigms. The forthcoming chapters thus explore exactly such a "disciplining" of service-learning.